



TAMARA KONSTANTIN

r ê v e r i e

Music for solo piano and chamber ensemble

Tamara Konstantin, Marc Verter, Piano
Jiaxin Lloyd Webber, Cello
Yu-Mien Sun, Violin

**Tamara
KONSTANTIN**

Rêverie

1	Poundbury for piano trio (2014) ^{†*}	3:38	12	Greenhill for piano trio (2014) ^{†*}	2:28
2	24 Hours for piano (2017)	3:20	13	Recollections for piano (2016)	3:18
3	Moonlight Rhapsody for piano and cello (2015) [†]	5:08	14	Purbeck for piano trio (2014) ^{†*}	4:25
4	Nocturne Regrets for piano (2015)	3:48	15	Twilight for piano (2016)	2:17
	Cello Sonata (2016) [†]	9:27	16	Chesil Beach for piano trio (2014) ^{†*}	3:08
5	I.	3:01		Piano Sonata No. 4 (2014)	6:08
6	II.	2:53	17	I.	2:16
7	III.	3:29	18	II.	1:33
8	Chapelhay Steps for piano (2014)	3:54	19	III.	2:16
9	Rêverie for piano trio (2016) ^{†*}	2:28		Piano Sonata No. 3 (2013)	10:54
10	Abbotsbury Gardens for piano trio (2014) ^{†*}	3:23	20	I.	3:02
11	Love Ballad for piano (2016)	2:34	21	II.	1:34
			22	III.	2:49
			23	IV.	3:23

Tamara Konstantin **1–16**, **Marc Verter** **17–23**, **Piano**
Jiaxin Lloyd Webber, Cello[†]
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For more information and manuscript enquiries please visit www.tamarakonstantin.com

Tamara KONSTANTIN

Rêverie



Tamara Konstantin, an executive in an oil firm, was on holiday with her husband in Canada when they both attended an organ recital in the local cathedral. They enjoyed works by Bach and Saint-Saëns, but then heard a short contemporary piece which Konstantin thought so awful that she turned to her husband and said, jokingly, 'I could do better than that!' He replied, 'Well, go on then. Do it.'

'I really was joking,' she says. 'I'd never written a bar of music in my life. But his challenge unleashed something in me, so I decided to have a go. And then I couldn't stop.'

The genie was out of the bottle, and the result

is this delightful collection of short piano and chamber pieces, full of flowing melodies and unpretentious charm. 'Some modern composers are more inclined to structural complexity rather than melody, which is fine, of course, but it's not for me. I love melody, and that's what I have to write. I simply want to compose melodies which give pleasure.' Many of the pieces are inspired by the beautiful countryside and coastline surrounding Konstantin's home in Dorset. Others reflect a mood, or emotion. Two are based on existing works by Bach and Beethoven. One piece, more dramatic and stormy in tone, is written in dark tribute to the horrors her Georgian family suffered under Stalin's purges in the former Soviet Union.

Konstantin's music has now received glowing reviews on Classic FM, in *Classical Music*, *The Lady*, and elsewhere – and it has all flowed from the dam of creativity which burst open that day in Canada.

That's the media-friendly, Cinderella-like version of events, but it does something of a disservice to Konstantin's disciplined upbringing as a serious musician. For in truth, she was very far from starting her musical career from scratch when she began composing. She had learned the piano during her childhood in Georgia, attending a special music school for gifted children, and then went on to complete her studies at the Tbilisi Music Academy. There she performed with the State Symphony Orchestra of Georgia, and gave many solo recitals.

After graduation, she felt she had reached a crossroads in her musical life, and decided to try something else. 'I knew music would always be a part of me, part of my existence, but I had to see what else I could do. So I stopped practising eight hours a day, and looked around for new opportunities.'

'Something else' was a career on Georgian TV. For three years, Konstantin worked on a daily programme reading the latest political news, and twice a month hosted in-depth interviews with local celebrities. She worked regularly on radio too. She thoroughly enjoyed it, but became increasingly aware of some of the limitations of her situation in late-Soviet era Georgia. 'Our equipment was so old that we didn't dare do many live programmes because we were afraid it would all fall apart on air. At one time, a Japanese visitor came to see our studios, and he said to me, "Madam, you have a wonderful museum here." It makes me laugh now.'

Seeking a new challenge, she moved to England in 1990. Already having fluent English, she found a job with an oil company, and re-invented herself once again. She stayed in the oil industry for 23 years, helping companies negotiate their strategies in the former Soviet Union and Central Asia, and eventually rose to become vice president of business development. 'In those 23 years I feel I learned more about oil than any geologist or geophysicist,' she says fondly.

The work involved long hours and lots of travel, but music was still always in the background. She

still played for her own pleasure, and performed many times for charity events. It was at this point in her life that Konstantin attended the fateful recital in Canada, and rediscovered her compositional creativity. 'I still can't quite believe it,' she says. 'But I feel inspired all the time: I simply have to compose.'

A great part of her inspiration stems from her deep love for her adopted country – and more particularly, for her home county of Dorset. 'I love this country, and I'm very proud to be British,' she says. 'Britain gave me the opportunity to achieve my dreams and goals. In the former Soviet Union, you had to know someone to get ahead. Here you are given a chance on your own merits. People sometimes take that for granted – they don't realise how extraordinary that is.'

Konstantin – who calls herself 'a miniaturist' – has created a style which, with its gentle melodiousness and invocation of an elegiac melancholy peculiar to English pastoral music, pays homage to her love for Britain. Several of the pieces are part of a collection she calls *Dorset Sketches*.

The first of them is *Poundbury*, composed to celebrate the success of a town created by Prince Charles in the 1990s as a reaction against current trends in urban planning. 'People call it the "Marmite town" – you either love it, or hate it,' says Konstantin. 'I love it. To me it revisits history with a modern twist.'

Other items from *Dorset Sketches* include *Chapelhay Steps*, *Chesil Beach*, *Greenhill*, *Purbeck* and *Abbotsbury Gardens*. 'Chapelhay

is such a beautiful place – and I feel a strong connection to it, because my husband was baptised in the local church. I feel an even stronger connection to Greenhill, because that is where I now live. Chesil Beach is part of the Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is a breath-taking site: if I were a painter, I'd love to sketch it, but I've tried to capture the beauty in music. Purbeck and Abbotsbury Gardens are also famously beautiful sites in Dorset, and I wanted to evoke the emotions they inspire in me.'

With its tranquil beginning, livelier middle section, and sleepy conclusion, *24 Hours* is structured around the activities of an average day from waking to bedtime. But there is another reason behind the name too. 'I had sketches of various melodies lying around, but had not yet pulled them together. Then, just 24 hours before the recording session, I realised I could make them into a piece. It was nerve-wracking to record.'

Moonlight and *Rêverie* are both based on pre-existing works, in the tradition of Gounod's *Ave Maria*; the former on Beethoven's '*Moonlight*' *Sonata*, and the latter (like Gounod's piece) on *Prelude in C major, BWV 846* from Book 1 of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*. 'At first I wanted to write a vocalise for soprano over the "*Moonlight*" *Sonata*, but I adore the lyrical qualities of the cello too, so decided to compose it for that instrument. And I was so lucky that such a wonderful musician as Jiaxin Lloyd Webber agreed to play it. With the other piece, which I've written for a trio, I felt that if someone else had been able to adapt Bach's music, then I would like

to try too – and I found it fascinating to discover how much one can bring to it without altering a note of the original.'

Jiaxin's talent also lies behind the *Cello Sonata*. 'I was inspired by her extraordinary musicianship, her ability, and her passion, and so wrote this *Sonata* for her. It was wonderful to work with her on it.'

Works such as *Nocturne Regrets*, *Love Ballad*, *Recollections* and *Twilight* express universal emotions, and familiar moods. 'We all have something to regret, and we all fall in love,' says Konstantin. 'With *Twilight*, I wanted to recapture a vision of the sun coming down and dying away: the music goes down at the end, like the sinking of the sun.'

Of the two piano sonatas presented here, *Piano Sonata No. 4* is lighter in mood and more in keeping with the style of lyrical Romanticism on the rest of the album. *Piano Sonata No. 3*, however, is more powerful and emotional, and is dedicated to the suffering experienced by Konstantin's family under Stalin. 'My grandfather was a political prisoner, and members of my family were exiled to Siberia. Through my childhood, I felt the pain of their experiences, and even then, there was still lots of fear. I really poured my anger into this work, and I dedicate it to their suffering.'

Konstantin still feels she has much more to give. 'I wish I'd known earlier that I can do this. It's so close to my heart. I feel I have a different life now, a different mission. And I love it.'

Warwick Thompson



Jiaxin Lloyd Webber

Jiaxin Lloyd Webber graduated from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1997. While in China she performed with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra before moving to New Zealand where she received her master's degree at the University of Auckland in 2001. While in New Zealand, Lloyd Webber was principal cello of the Auckland Chamber Orchestra, a founder member of the Aroha String Quartet, played regularly with both the Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra and performed cello concertos by Dvořák, Elgar and Lalo with the Auckland Symphony Orchestra. While in Auckland she also built up an extensive private teaching practice. Now based in the UK, Jiaxin is married to cellist Julian Lloyd Webber and they have performed together on BBC Radio 3, Classic FM, CNN international TV, and BBC TV. They have recorded for Universal Classics and Naxos, and in 2014 they toured together with both the English Chamber Orchestra and the European Union Chamber Orchestra. Their recordings have been chosen as 'Record of the Month' by both *Gramophone* magazine and *BBC Music Magazine* and as 'CD of the Month' by both Classic FM and BBC Radio 3. Their 2013 recording *A Tale of Two Cellos* (8.573251) held the number one spot on the UK classical album chart for many weeks and is one of the bestselling recordings on Naxos. Jiaxin Lloyd Webber has also performed on radio and TV programmes such as *BBC Breakfast*, *The Andrew Marr Show* and Radio 4's *Midweek*.



Yu-Mien Sun

Yu-Mien Sun has established herself as a sought-after young artist of her generation, and has been praised for her sensitive approach and sincere musicality. She has performed at the Royal Albert Hall, the Barbican Hall, and appeared on a number of BBC TV broadcasts. She is frequently invited to play as a section principal in London orchestras such as Orchestra Vitae and the London Moonlight Symphony Orchestra, and has also been a guest soloist at the Malcolm Arnold and the Lake District International Music festivals. Also a chamber musician, Sun founded the Verbunkos Trio in 2016. She is a two-time winner of the Sylvia Cleaver Chamber Music Prize, and has worked with chamber music artists such as Julian Jacobson, Daniel Tong and Ulrich Heinen. Sun graduated from the Royal Birmingham

Conservatoire with a first class honours degree in 2017, where she received the Principal's Prize awarded by Julian Lloyd Webber, and won a number of internal competitions. While studying at the Royal Academy of Music in 2017–18, she had the privilege of playing in Pinchas Zukerman's masterclass. She is currently a student of Jack Liebeck at the Royal Academy of Music, supported by the Belmore Woodgate Scholarship and the Craxton Memorial Trust.



Photo: Jules Lawrence

Marc Verter

Marc Verter combines solo work with performing chamber music, directing opera and teaching, and is a passionate advocate of song. For over five years, he was the artistic director of the Chelsea Schubert Festival. Verter is also a vocal coach and *répétiteur*, and is on the staff of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the Royal College of Music. A consummate performer, he has given song recitals that have been broadcast live on radio in Israel, Belgium and the Netherlands. He has worked with singers such as Nelly Miricioiu, Jonathan Lemalu, Elena Xanthoudakis and Chen Reiss, and his first album with Russian soprano Ilona Domnich was released in December 2009 on the Quartz label. As part of his dedication to art song, Verter has researched specific areas of the genre, particularly late 19th-century French song, focusing on the musical settings of the poetry of Charles Baudelaire and leading performance workshops. Verter also founded *Salon Musical*, a show which recreates Parisian salons of the 19th century through theatre and music, with performances taking place in venues such as the National Portrait Gallery, the Chelsea Arts Club and the Frome Festival. Verter has performed at festivals

in Israel, North America and Europe, and each summer directs opera scenes at the AIMS International Music School. He is also a regular adjudicator at song competitions in London. Verter was born and raised in Israel. He studied at Tel Aviv University; the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama.

Poundbury

Photo: Blackbeck (www.iStockPhoto.com)



This collection of recent works by Tamara Konstantin brings together short piano and chamber pieces, all of which share her inclination towards miniature forms, flowing melodies and unpretentious charm. Many of these are inspired by the beautiful countryside and coastline of Konstantin's Dorset home, evoking an elegiac wistfulness peculiar to English pastoral music. Others reflect moods or emotions both universal and specific, such as the powerful *Third Piano Sonata* dedicated to the suffering experienced by the members of Konstantin's family who were exiled to Siberia by Stalin, and the evocative and lyrical *Love Ballad*.

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A detailed track list can be found on page 2 of the booklet

Recorded: 7 February 2017 **2–8**, **11**, **13**, **15**, **17–23** and 12 March 2018 **1**, **9–10**, **12**, **14**, **16**
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